

Dustin Monroe
Madame Chair and Committee Members...

I rise in Support of SB 342 to Establish a Montana Indian language preservation pilot program.

Oki Napi (Hello friends) Blackfeet
Chande Washte Mnuha (I come in good Heart way) Assinborne

The Native American Languages Act of 1990 is the short cited title for executive Order PUBLIC LAW 101-47

Congress found convincing evidence that student achievement and performance, community and school pride, and educational opportunity are clearly and directly tied to respect for, and support of, the first language of the child.

The academics suggest that being Bilingual improves the brain's so-called executive function — a command system that directs the attention processes that we use for planning, solving problems and performing various other mentally demanding tasks. These processes include ignoring distractions to stay focused, switching attention willfully from one thing to another and holding information in mind — like remembering a sequence of directions while driving.

Others today will speak to why culturally how it is important to have language besides being one of the requirements being federally recognized as Tribal Government and that in the treaties it has provisions about Education. I want to speak against some of the arguments that the opposition will say on why we shouldn't have a language bill.

Doesn't the Federal government Fund things like this and take care of them?

Actually No, most of the funding for Native Americans from federal funding is only acting on 63% of where it should be and some agencies work on 35%. There are also 566 federally recognized tribes in the United States, Picture if Montana had that many states to compete with for funding instead of just 49 other. And yes we do pay taxes and not all Native Americans live on reservations, in Billings alone 5000 Native Americans reside who do pay state taxes. Also States like Wisconsin, Arizona and others with large number of NA have funded language programs.

The Establishment of a Montana Indian language preservation pilot program would be done on all seven reservations and the little shell tribe. It doesn't say that every person in Montana will be forced to learn a Native Language but that the tribes will be given the opportunity to teach their individual language. Spanish, French, and German can still be taught but maybe instead of German a child in Browning, MT can learn Blackfeet. It can be an incentive to attend school because Tribal Language

gives a sense of Identity, which at time is lacking. This can lead to higher scores in academics and will help with the dropout rate in Native American Communities.

I close with this:

In 1879, Standing Bear challenged decades of U.S. policy when, in the course of federal prosecution in Omaha, Nebraska, he demanded to be recognized as a person. That was the first time an Indian was permitted to appear in court in this country and have his rights tried. The government argued that Indians were not entitled to the protection of a writ of habeas corpus because they were not citizens or even "persons" under American law.

Standing Bear rose. Half facing the audience, he held out his right hand, and stood motionless. After a long pause, looking up at the judge, he said: "That hand is not the color of yours, but if I prick it, the blood will flow, and I shall feel pain. The blood is of the same color as yours. God made me, and I am a man..."

How far have we come in Understanding each other in 100 years, but we as a state have farther to go. I am proud to say I am American, Montanan, and Fort Belknap Tribal Member. Please Support SB 342 and let it get a vote on the House Floor.